# Piano for Kids 2

Corinna Simon

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## ABOUT THE RECORDING

The reviews for Corinna Simon's first "Piano for Kids" album were excellent: "A real treasure also for adults" (MDR). The Berlin based pianist had recorded an impressive kaleidoscope of piano works explicitly written for children. For "Piano for Kids Vol. 2" Corinna Simon put together once again a program of fascinating piano pieces composed by great masters for children and young people: from Bach (Prelude) and Handel (Minuet & Sonatina) to Debussy (Children's Corner) and Tchaikovsky (Youth Album) to Ernest Bloch (Enfantines) and Béla Bartók (For Children & Mikrokosmos). There are also less known composers on the album: Great piano works worth discovering by Zoltán Kodály (Children's Dances), Domenico Cimarosa (Sonata: Andantino), Muzio Clementi (Sonatine), Jacques Ibert (Histoires), Paul Juon (Lullaby) and Germaine Tailleferre (Fleurs de France & Seule dans la forêt). "The music on this album should inspire our imagination, whether in children, teenagers or adults", says Corinna Simon, "It should be like a treasure chest that you reach into without knowing exactly what you will extract from it next". The program put together by Corinna Simon is a real treasure trove even for connoisseurs of the piano repertoire. For Beethoven's anniversary year, "Piano for Children 2" also presents the first movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Sonata in D Major - this youthful work without an opus number does not appear in the canon of 32 piano sonatas, but should not be underestimated.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Corinna Simon was born in Berlin. From 1978 she studied piano at the "Hochschule der Künste", Berlin, and after that at the "Hochschule für Musik und Theater", Munich. In 1984 she had her debut as a soloist at the Berlin Philharmonie. Various engagements have led her to the major music metropoles of Europe, like Vienna, Paris, Stockholm, Oslo, Brussels, Moscow and to the "Lucerne Festival". She has also performed in the USA, Asia and Africa, among them in Washington, New York, San Francisco, Singapore, Jakarta, Brunei Darussalam and Johannesburg. In recent years, she has specialized in performing and recording piano rarities. Her RCA recording with piano works by a group of six young French composers, "L'Album des Six" received five star reviews in Fono Forum. Her "Piano For Kids" album presenting piano works composed for children and youth received fantastic reviews.

# PIANO FOR KIDS 2

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### Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Allegro from the Sonata in D major, Wo047 | 4:05 |

### Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) from "Enfantines"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Elves | 1:22 |
| 3 | Melody | 1:59 |
| 4 | Teasing | 1:01 |
| 5 | Dream | 1:54 |

### Béla Bartók (1881-1945)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6 | Jeering Song from *For Children II* | 0:40 |
| 7 | Sorrow from *For Children III* | 0:55 |
| 8 | Bulgarian rhythm from *Mikrokosmos IV* | 1:02 |
| 9 | Paprikajancsi from *Mikrokosmos V* | 1:01 |

### George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 10 | Menuet in G minor, HWV 453 | 1:08 |
| 11 | Sonatina in B-flat major, HWV 585 | 0:59 |

### Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | Solfeggietto in C minor, Wq 117/2 | 1:10 |

### Zoltán Kodály (1882-1967) from "Children's Dances"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 13 | No. 1 Allegretto | 0:19 |
| 14 | No. 2 Allegretto cantabile | 0:22 |
| 15 | No. 3 Vivace | 0:27 |
| 16 | No. 4 Moderato cantabile | 1:16 |
| 17 | No. 5 Allegro moderato, poco rubato | 1:35 |
| 18 | No. 10 Allegretto leggiero | 1:32 |

### Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 19 | Sonata in G minor: Andantino | 1:12 |

### Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) Sonatina in G major, Op. 36 No. 2

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 20 | Allegretto | 2:19 |
| 21 | Allegretto | 1:00 |
| 22 | Allegro | 1:35 |

### Sergey Prokofiev (1891-1953) from "Music for Children", Op. 65

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 23 | Waltz | 1:44 |
| 24 | March | 1:11 |
| 25 | Tarantella | 1:22 |

**Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 26 | Praeludium in F major, BWV 927 | 0:41 |
| 27 | Praeludium in D major, BWV 936 | 2:20 |

**Jacques Ibert** (1890-1962)
**from "Histoires"**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 28 | A giddy girl | 1:48 |
| 29 | The little white donkey | 2:19 |
| 30 | The glass cage | 1:27 |

**Pyotr Tchaikovsky** (1840-1893)
**from "Children's Album", Op. 39**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 31 | Waltz | 1:22 |
| 32 | Old French Song | 0:59 |
| 33 | The Old Witch | 0:54 |

**Germaine Tailleferre** (1892-1983)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 34 | Seule dans la forêt | 2:18 |

**Germaine Tailleferre**
**from "Fleurs de France"**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 35 | Coquelicot de Guyenne | 0:50 |
| 36 | Lavandin de Haute-Provence | 1:03 |
| 37 | Bleuet de Picardie | 1:04 |

**Paul Juon** (1872-1940)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 38 | Lullaby from *For Children to Eavesdrop*, Op. 38 | 2:34 |

**Claude Debussy** (1862-1918)
**from "Children's Corner"**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 39 | Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum | 2:36 |
| 40 | The Little Shepherd | 2:45 |
| 41 | Golliwog's Cake-Walk | 3:13 |

Total Time: 61:43

## Corinna Simon, piano and conception

# The Piano as a Musical Paintbox

*Corinna Simon plays music for children – and adults*

A glance at the mobile, a brief search on the Web. When we enter the names of musicians who are famous today, their images or even entire films appear online. We immediately see the people before us, what they wear, how they move, their hair, eyes, fingers. We see them up close and perhaps even catch ourselves imitating a few of their mannerisms. But what about composers who lived in earlier centuries, such as Bach or Handel? What about Beethoven? At least with Bartók or Debussy there are photographs, even early recordings of them playing the piano. Basically, though, we have only their music through which these composers speak to us. Only?

"As a child, when playing the music of composers who died many years ago, I always wanted to immerse myself in what that age was like," says Simon. Then I put something like a pair of fantasy glasses on and tried to bring these people to life: "What kind of life did the composer lead? How did he or she play the piano? What might have been going through his or her mind? Maybe he or she didn't feel so different from how I'm feeling today?" We mostly do not understand earlier variants of the language we speak today. What does the Early Middle German *Ik gihorta ðat seggen* actually mean? With music it's different. Regardless of how old a piece of music might be – 100 or 300 years – we can still sense its character, recognize that it sounds cheerful, sad or crazy.

"The music on this album should only be itself, it should only stimulate our imagination," whether it's for children, the young or grown-ups. "I've had this desire for a very long time," says Corinna Simon. "The ideas for the program on this disc have been gestating for quite some time." Simon had already presented several of her discoveries and beloved pieces on her double album "Piano for Children." Now we hear not only pieces composed for children but also those that can be played by children. Several of the works are quite tricky, but you don't need grown-up hands to be able to reach certain chords.

However, the first piece is not music composed for children, but, instead, music by a youthful composer. Compared with say Mozart, we know little about the childhood of **Ludwig van Beethoven**. His father was strict and unpredictable. If the father did not like the progress his son was making, he would give him a thrashing with a cane. Ludwig gave his first public performance in Cologne when he was eight. The eleven-year old got an additional teacher in 1782: Christian Gottlob Neefe. His teacher's occupation: court organist and at times temporary Kapellmeister. Beethoven learned a lot from Neefe, who had good connections in the world of music and made it possible for three newly composed Beethoven piano sonatas go into print quickly. They are known today as the "Kurfürstensonaten" because Beethoven dedicated them to "the most worthy Archbishop and Prince Elector [*Kurfürst*] of Cologne, Maximilian Friedrich, my most gracious Lord … composed by Ludwig van Beethoven, aged eleven." The first sonata is in D major. Beethoven would later compose, among other things, two other piano sonatas and his famous violin concerto in this key.

While to Beethoven the piano remained the *non plus ultra* of musical instruments, by comparison the Swiss-born American composer **Ernest Bloch** left little for pianists. In the 1920s Bloch was the Musical Director of the Cleveland Institute of Music in Ohio and was already the father of three children. “Enfantines” is a collection of ten pieces for children he composed in 1923. His 15-year-old daughter Lucienne contributed enchanting pen and ink drawings to the collection. It is no wonder then she would later succeed as a painter and photographer. Bloch’s complex compositions were sometimes treated with open hostility. And what is he doing here? He composes in a very simple style. The pieces are clearly structured with melodies emerging that can be sung with ease. “Melody” is also the title of one of these pieces – Lucienne illustrated it with a child seated at the piano. Bloch has the melody move between both hands. The hand that is “free” because it is not playing the melody always provides a gentle accompaniment. You are somehow reminded of **Claude Debussy**’s “Children’s Corner”, from which Corinna Simone included three works in this recording.

“Children’s Corner” was composed between 1906 and 1908. Debussy dedicated the collection to his daughter “Chouchou.” The opening piece, “Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum,” refers to Muzio Clementi and his collection of instructional piano pieces, “Gradus ad Parnassum.” Debussy remarked about this with mischievous humour: “It is a kind of hygienic and progressively difficult gymnastic exercise; it is therefore recommended that you play the piece each morning on an empty stomach, starting *moderato* and work its way up to a lively tempo.” “Children’s Corner” also played an important role in Corinna Simon’s childhood, because in her parents’ home there was a record still famous today featuring the no less famous Italian concert pianist Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Music played a major role in Corinna’s life from an early age. At the very latest when her family obtained a piano. Corinna was five years old and had not yet started school. “I was especially excited about the piano,” she admits in retrospect. Why? “It was this special sound that fascinated me. I wanted to play what I had heard on records immediately.” She began taking her first piano lessons right after that – but how bitter her disappointment when Corinna learned she couldn’t play all the pieces she loved so dearly. The first piano concerto by Pyotr Tchaikovsky – a piece to fall in love with, but simply not possible for a five-year-old to play… “It already irritated me at that time that there were hardly any pieces for children on records.” Today the concert pianist, who performs throughout the world, is glad to help make up for this with her own skills.

Corinna Simon has not chosen the works for this recording based on a strict programme. The pieces are not organized according to when and where the composers lived. “It is supposed to be like a treasure chest which you reach into without knowing exactly what you will pull out next.” That is why there is music from Russia and France as well as from Germany and Hungary. **Béla Bartók** is, alongside **Zoltán Kodály**, probably the most famous Hungarian composer. He filled a multi-volume series entitled “Mikrokosmos” and whoever has worked their way through these six volumes is certainly an excellent pianist! But some of the pieces seem a bit awkward. Others, such as “Bulgarian rhythm” have a surprising quality to them and sound a little like a musical box. Between 1908 and 1911 Bartók composed a collection “For Children” before “Mikrokosmos.” This was just when he had begun teaching at the Liszt Academy in Budapest. This collection has 85 arrangements most of which are based on Hungarian and Slovakian folk tunes. Here, too, the sequence of pieces follows a principle. Each succeeding work becomes increasingly complex and technically demanding.

We are fortunate with Bartók that several recordings of him performing at the piano himself have survived. Listening to these recordings does not reveal him in any way to be a pianist who emphasizes rhythm, as many people regard him today. Of course his playing had a certain dash to it, but he didn't hammer the keys – instead he relishes gentle moments and sometimes shifts the tempo to more smoothly handle transitions. According to Bartók music should "speak" to the listener.

While Bartók is certainly one of the most famous 20th-century composers, the name Marcelle Taillefesse is not very well known at all. That is not surprising for today she is better known as **Germaine Tailleferre**. She didn't change her name through marriage but in forceful protest against her own father. For he had too vigorously refused to support the musical inclinations of his daughter. He imposed a kind of ban on music and Germaine rebelled. By the time she was twelve years old, she was already enrolled at the Paris Conservatoire. Her private life was marked by much light and darkness and she was a member of "Les Six," an alliance of influential composers including Artur Honegger, Francis Poulenc – and Tailleferre as the only woman. In 1930 she composed "Fleurs de France," eight piano works in which flowers are turned into sound. "A cheerful grace, delicate and full of dignity" is how a French critic once described the music of Tailleferre. "The mixture of tonality and dissonances is particularly appealing," says Corinna Simon. "At the same time, Tailleferre often composes using unique rhythms." Of course you cannot smell the fragrance of flowers while playing the piano, but the pieces stir your own fantasy, including that of the pianist: "I think in colours, though not so concretely that I associate every key with a specific colour with a key, But all the same, images still emerge repeatedly in my mind." This is one of the most appealing things about listening to and making music: You can refine your fantasy and let it wander: "Anybody reading 'Harry Potter' today is essentially doing the same thing."

With **George Frideric Handel**, **Johann Sebastian Bach** and **Domenico Cimarosa** three composers from the Baroque period also appear in her programme – perhaps most surprisingly the Italian Cimarosa, who composed around 70 operas and is known for works for the lyric stage. In fact, he also composed over 30 keyboard sonatas, originally for harpsichord. Domenico Scarlatti and his 555 keyboard sonatas, which made him famous all across Italy and Europe, certainly served as a source of inspiration for Cimarosa. It becomes a little evident here how Cimarosa departs from a strict Baroque style to write melodies that already anticipate the style galant – unadorned and ideally suited for amateurs, genuine connoisseurs and, not least of all, children. This music can be played wonderfully by small hands, too...

**Muzio Clementi** is also an example of how mistaken one can be about composers. "Just as with Carl Czerny and his etudes, for a long time Clementi and his sonatinas had the reputation of having a somewhat rigid style," says Corinna Simon, summarizing the long-held one-sided perception of Clementi. No, Clementi can "also be charming and humorous. I do not want to deprive anybody of this music, even if I admit that when I was young I also did not properly appreciate what made his music special." The title "Sonatina" certainly comes across as somewhat abstract with Clementi – on the other hand, there are also very suggestive titles such as "The little white donkey" by **Jacques Ibert** on this album, perhaps a favourite of some listeners from their own piano lessons – or "The glass cage," that is full of surprises.

The Russian repertoire on this album includes “Lullaby” by **Paul Juon** which specifies: “To be played at a real cradle.” Is it possible to hear the creaking of the wood floor in this piece?” For his “Children’s Album”, **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsk**y took his cue from “Album for the Young” by Robert Schumann. “The Old Witch” sounds quite realistic. “You get the impression that Tchaikovsky was delighted to be composing this music.” Music which in its own way is very fine and transparent. Achieving a lot with simple means – he has achieved that here. “A transparent quality is also true for **Sergey Prokofiev**. But it is not false frugality,” adds Simon. “Every note is in the right place and has its own effect.” Nothing is too much, nothing not enough. Is it a coincidence that both Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev were fond of fairy tales? One need only think of ballets like “Swan Lake” and “The Nutcracker” or “Sleeping Beauty” as well as the opera “The Love for Three Oranges.” In this recording for the piano, the large orchestral works seem to be under a microscope, with everything reduced but very clearly visible!

Having the opportunity to present music that arouses interest and sparks curiosity is a dream come true for Corinna Simon. The album may not compel anyone to become a pianist, but everyone will feel tempted, young and old alike…

*Christoph Vratz*
*Translation: texthouse*

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